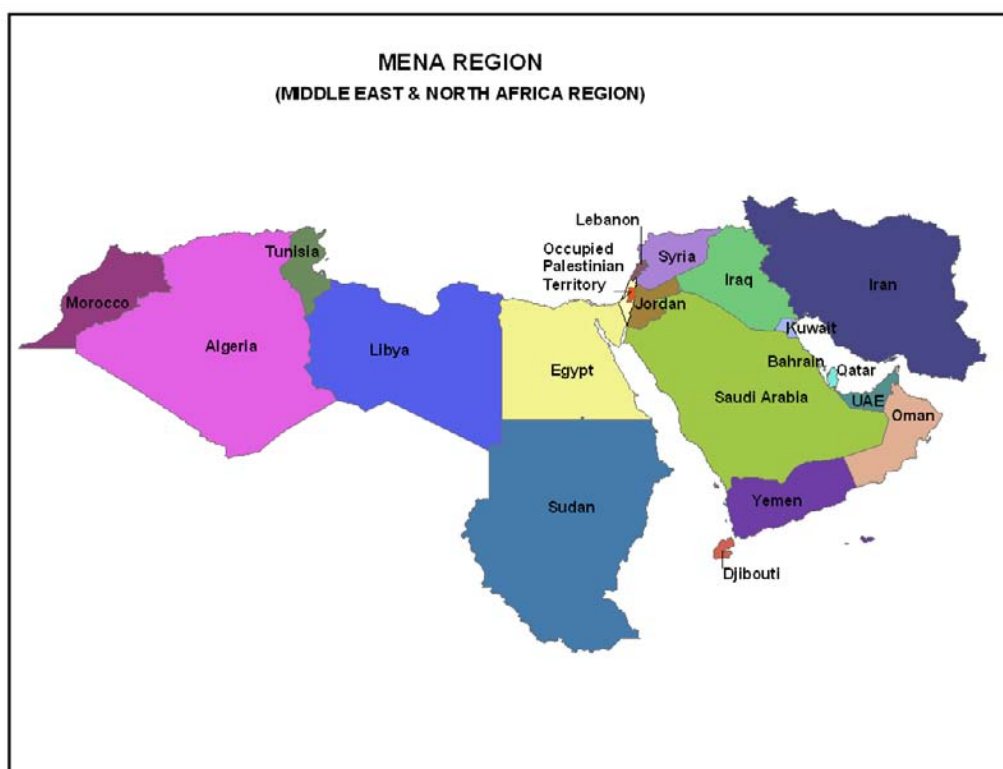


UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA IN 2007



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Regional Office financial needs for 2007 (staff costs included)

Sector	US\$
Emergency preparedness and capacity-building	150,000
Emergency response	350,000
Building partnerships and coordination	100,000
Total	600,000

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains plagued by emergencies, be it as a result of man-made or natural disasters. It is also, unfortunately, a region in which providing humanitarian assistance has increasingly become dangerous. The respect of the universal principle of comprehensive humanitarian access has oftentimes been denied in the latest crises plaguing the region. When granted however, the Darfur crisis and the resulting deaths of 12 humanitarian workers in 2006 alone, painfully reminded all stakeholders that not all believed in the purity and neutrality of their role.

Iraq continues to illustrate both points, and daily reports from the country are characterized by violence, absence of law and order and loss, as well as a recurrent extreme difficulty for humanitarian actors – UN and NGOs alike – to reach out to the most vulnerable, due to this persistent insecurity. The impact this situation is having on children and women alike in terms of lost lives, human rights violations, health and educational opportunities missed and overall lack of access to services is simply terrible.

On a daily basis, Iraqi children are directly or indirectly affected by ongoing violence and the unacceptable numbers of civilians who pay the price with their lives seems to be increasing in a disquieting way, based on news reports, unofficial estimates and evidence from the ground. Rapid social changes which are taking place due to civil upheaval are contributing to a breakdown in family coping and support systems especially the loss of parents and caregivers. Between July and August 2006 alone, the Human Rights Office in Baghdad reports a total of 6,600 deaths. Also the number of displaced populations continues to increase, whether within or outside the country. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to internal violence are estimated to exceed 360,000, while several reports estimate the number of Iraqis having left the country since 2003 at above 1.2 million. Yet, despite the presence of significant security forces in the country, humanitarian work in Iraq continues to be incredibly risky and costly for international and national assistance organizations. This clearly hampers their ability to bring support and assistance, and has a very negative impact for the protection and well-being of children and women who are the most vulnerable with respect to the need for humanitarian assistance during emergencies.

The war in Lebanon has in turn highlighted once again the volatility of the region, and has resulted in many lost lives – one third of them children –, massive relocation of more than a fifth of the country's population during the acute phase of the conflict, and their return to severely destroyed areas of origin. The conflict also resulted in huge damages to the national infrastructure, including schools, water and electrical supply systems and health facilities with an immediate impact on the ability for women and children to access services, but also clearly with a very significant bearing on the country's overall economic development. The use and the persistent presence of cluster bombs and unexploded ordnance after two months of intensive clearing efforts constitute a major threat to children and youngsters alike in the South.

In the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), the situation is particularly tense in the Gaza strip with worries of further deterioration. It is reported that, between January and September 2006, 464 Palestinian were killed, including 90 children. This is more than double the number killed during all of 2005 (210). There has been a continued system of closures of access and infrastructure as well both in the West Bank and throughout the Gaza strip. This seriously affects both the economic and social fabric of Palestinian society – including the right to education, to play and to health and nutrition. By the same token, the election of the Hamas government and the following restrictions of funding on the Palestinian authorities have resulted in very serious political tensions within the Palestinian population, and in the closure of a number of public services and Palestinian Authority-supported public institutions. The consequences in terms of access to services or overall insecurity in the country will continue to be felt for some time to come.

In the Sudan, despite the massive mobilization of humanitarian assistance for the Darfur emergency in the past two years, the situation of children, women and internally displaced communities remains extremely tenuous. It is estimated that almost 4 million people have been affected by the conflict – 1.8 million of which are children – and that about 2 million are displaced from their homes. Of the displaced, 1 million are estimated to be children and 120,000 have been newly displaced between April and October 2006.

The situation in Darfur is currently in the global spotlight for both humanitarian and political reasons, with humanitarian needs on the rise and the United Nations and the Government of Sudan (GOS) unable to agree on the means to protect civilians from the ongoing conflict. While negotiations have led to an extension of the African Union's peacekeeping mandate in the region, the issue is far from resolved. A possible upsurge in conflict threatens the fragile situation of the population and could send the region into chaotic insecurity leading to the withdrawal of most, if not all, of the humanitarian agencies who are currently the only lifeline for the displaced communities. Even now, humanitarian agencies are operating under very difficult and dangerous conditions. In 2006, twelve humanitarian workers have lost their lives in Darfur, which is more than in the last two years together.

In the South, special focus will need to be provided to the large number of IDP returnees and refugees. Despite political developments and agreements with the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), insecurity remains a concern for Sudanese returnees, while the Southern areas of Sudan have also proven many times over their vulnerability to natural disasters.

Beyond the very public emergencies mentioned above, children and women in MENA are constantly at risk of natural disasters. Countries such as the Djibouti, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Sudan – as well as Algeria, Morocco and Yemen, though to a lesser extent – are often victims of floods, drought and earthquakes. Each disaster leaves a humanitarian crisis in its wake, including death, injury, displacement and homelessness. Equally alarming is the risk associated to Avian Influenza with outbreaks reported in Djibouti, Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

The UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) continued to be the first port of call for the small Country Offices facing significant humanitarian crises, and has dedicated significant assistance to the Lebanon crisis – with implications in the Syrian Arab Republic – as well as to the Djibouti drought. Deterioration of the humanitarian contexts and political situation in Darfur, oPt and Iraq alike also meant increased support to fine tune and review contingency and early response planning for these crises.

Likewise, MENARO continued to focus its attention on building internal capacity regarding preparedness and early warning in all country teams, in order to improve emergency preparedness and response capacity while maintaining appropriate staff security. Within both the preparedness and the response focus, earlier lessons learnt underlined the need to build up and/or maintain a solid and up-to-date knowledge base regarding indicators on children affected by conflict and natural disasters, so as to be able to improve performance evaluation efforts but also enable UNICEF to be the voice of children, with underlining evidence-based indicators.

Emergency preparedness

Preparedness planning exercises included the identification of risks and threats specific to a country situation and consultations on the capacity and ability of governments and partner agencies to react to a given emergency scenario. Decisions on UNICEF's planned role and operations in such context were conducted in Djibouti, the Islamic Republic of Iran, oPt, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan and Yemen, as well as in Lebanon for the end-year period. During 2006

more focus was dedicated to working in-depth at sub-national level to review the consequences of the planned scenarios and the role of all staff at every level of the Country Office.

In all countries, including at sub-national level, emergency preparedness and response (EPR) exercises were preceded by a one-day training on basic concepts and methodologies of EPR planning, as well as on UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies and the fundamental humanitarian principles involved in emergency response.

MENARO recently supported an advance response planning in the Sudan towards anticipating and responding to a deterioration of humanitarian access in Darfur. As result of this effort, UNICEF completed an intensive Emergency Contingency Plan aiming at ensuring continued programme delivery and readiness by anticipating possible threats/needs and defining how staff will engage individually and collaboratively across the sectors.

In oPt, two similar exercises of reviewing the humanitarian context and its possible evolution – with attached humanitarian consequences and expected humanitarian access – were undertaken this year. The first was conducted in the context of the Gaza disengagement and consisted of strengthening response capacity in Gaza, notably in the areas of response planning, logistics, telecommunications and security. The second was aimed at preparing for and responding to the significant deterioration of security and access to services due to the lack of financial security for Palestinian Authority public workers, as well as the political tensions between Fatah and Hamas movements, in addition to the usual military incursions and closure of Gaza/Rafah strips from the Israeli Defence Forces and their humanitarian and psychological impact on women and children. Both exercises were particularly challenging in anticipating further difficulties in humanitarian access and trying to find innovative and effective ways to continue to provide at least minimal humanitarian assistance.

Finally, comprehensive and wide-ranging preparedness efforts were made to support each and every country in the region with Avian Influenza (AI) preparedness. UNICEF played a key role in supporting public institutions to structure their communication and advocacy efforts towards the most vulnerable – young children in particular – while continuing a much required assistance to both the health and education sectors in adequately reviewing their own preparedness/response capacities and requirements for potential AI epidemics. It is noteworthy that in MENA, the H5N1 virus has been reported in wild and migratory birds in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kuwait, and among domestic poultry in Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, oPt and the Sudan. Human cases of Influenza type A (H5N1) have also been reported in Iraq (3 cases), Egypt (14 cases), Jordan (1 imported case from Egypt) and Djibouti (1 case). Within the framework of the AI preparedness, a joint memorandum of understanding was formulated and subsequently signed by Regional Directors of UNICEF, WFP and WHO, defining their roles and responsibilities in MENA/Eastern Mediterranean regions.

Internal capacity-building efforts

Striving to help country teams, MENARO supported a three-day emergency simulation exercise in Syria on 18-24 March 2006, with a view to put the Country Office in a crisis-like situation, and for all staff to learn to react and use 'naturally' existing emergency response tools mechanisms, as well as identify internal bottlenecks in the office response. This exercise proved extremely useful and will be replicated in as many Country Offices as possible over 2007.

In a similar effort to learn from past efforts, MENARO supported the lessons learnt and evaluations conducted regarding the crises in Darfur, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon over 2006. Recommendations for action emanating from these exercises will constitute an important and solid basis for MENARO's focus in 2007-2008.

Finally, MENARO also contributed to the global consultation on adolescents in conflict situations, in an effort to reflect the particularities of MENA in terms of the size of the adolescent and youth

population, which the regional entity sees as an opportunity for a different/improved programming in emergencies.

Emergency response

MENARO continued to support Country Offices facing crisis situations. During 2006, considerable assistance was provided to the drought crisis in Djibouti and to the recent Lebanon war and its sub-regional implications. Similarly, though to a lesser level, MENARO supported countries in crisis such as oPt, Iraq and the Sudan, however more in an advisory capacity regarding humanitarian policy and mechanisms available to support the response, considering the more experienced and larger-sized teams available in these countries.

In Lebanon, as in all other crises, MENARO assisted in maintaining the focus and ensuring that immediate response met UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies. Efforts on performance monitoring were equally important in trying to have and sustain evidenced-based indicators to help support a verifiable results-based review of the impact of UNICEF's activities on the ground.

Efforts on programme excellence were pursued through significant thematic training facilitated in the area of nutrition in emergencies for Djibouti, the Sudan and Yemen, with two centres of excellence in this area set up in Yemen for the training of the entire Region. Likewise, considerable attention was dedicated to security-related initiatives, with sizeable improvements achieved in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, oPt, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

Coordination and partnerships

MENARO participated in an Inter-Agency Meeting in Cairo aimed at building a regional network of UN and non-UN counterparts working on emergency preparedness and response. The objectives include the undertaking of joint missions, be it for joint preparedness/contingency planning efforts or for joint response; the convergence of tools and processes with regards to emergency preparedness and response planning; and, potentially, joint training.

Equally important for UNICEF in future years will be to move beyond its own capacity-building towards partners capacity. A first step was undertaken through MENARO's support to the Iraq Country Office who trained their Iraqi Red Crescent partners on child protection in emergencies.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

During 2007 MENARO will aim at enhancing UNICEF's capacity to prepare itself to adequately and efficiently respond to the needs of women and children living in unstable environments and continue to work on increasing the Region's emergency preparedness and response capacity, with special emphasis on response planning, thereby prioritizing countries facing ongoing and/or potential (new) emergencies, such as Iraq, Lebanon, oPt, the Sudan and Yemen, but also Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic. Another important focus will be an outward-looking perspective, in reaching out to partners and attempting to build up their own capacity to respond, whether in conjunction with UNICEF, or independently. Similarly important, in the context of the global humanitarian reform, will be the opportunities for joint missions/training to be pursued with other key UN partners, with special emphasis on building capacity for cluster leadership/cluster network requirements. In a nutshell, the following activities will structure MENARO's focus for 2007:

Emergency preparedness and capacity-building (US\$ 150,000)

- In the attempt to alert Country Offices of potential emergencies that would require UNICEF's assistance, continue to expand the early warning/early action system introduced in 2005, which will trigger the implementation of a mandatory set of minimum essential preparedness actions (early warning);

- Support UNICEF Offices in countries considered most volatile/at risk, such as Iraq, Lebanon, oPt, the Sudan and Yemen to a) develop and update, b) operationalize and c) practice advanced response planning, including at sub-regional and sub-national levels and within an inter-agency context;
- In the above-mentioned countries, and in the framework of the cluster approach, support the review of national partners' capacity and establish/reinforce existing technical partners/coordination networks;
- Support Country Offices from other at-risk countries, such as Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Syrian Arab Republic to a) develop and update, b) operationalize and c) practice response planning within an inter-agency context;
- Focus on operational preparedness – oftentimes weaker than programme planning in former evaluations of response – with regular missions in sectors of supply/logistics, telecommunications and security, including civil/military coordination and Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), in order to make sure that preparedness steps are indeed operationalized;
- As much as possible, use the simulation tool to build Country Office capacity to react quickly and in a coordinated manner, while building in 'reflexes' within the teams in terms of coordinated early action.

Emergency response (US\$ 350,000)

- Should funding be available, ensure that at-risk countries can rapidly assist at least 50,000 affected people at the onset of any crisis; pre-position limited supplies in high-risk countries – or, when more appropriate, in a regionally central location – to enable Country Offices to respond quickly, safely and comprehensively to the needs of children and women;
- Strengthen the 'surge capacity' mechanism for the MENA region to allow fast deployment of experienced staff – particularly in the sector of cluster leadership – through the expansion of MENA rosters, providing opportunities for national staff from other countries to gain experience in an emergency country; secure targeted standby agreements with seconding agencies etc.;
- Increase capacity to implement emergency operations in a safe and secure manner adhering to UN/UNICEF security policy guidelines and instructions; operate within the framework of the United Nations Security Management System; and coordinate fully with UN field security and designated officials;
- Support performance monitoring and assist all Country Offices in crises to maintain/develop evidence-based indicators that will give them clear tools for advocacy in speaking out for children, while allowing the team to review its actual impact on children's living conditions;
- Support the above by compiling and reviewing lessons learnt and evaluation exercises, and find ways/tools to better use the recommendations stemming from such initiatives.

Building partnership and coordination (US\$ 100,000)

- Looking beyond its internal capacity-building efforts, attempt to forge strong partnerships with national/regional bodies and partners with a view to undertake joint training of respective partners' staffs in the area of emergency response. If nothing else, such an activity would greatly improve mutual understanding of both partners' mandate and respective capacities, and thus tremendously improve the sectoral coordination in any future crisis;
- Within the same wavelength, continue to strongly support the set-up and regular coordination of efforts undertaken through the nascent regional inter-agency network on emergency preparedness and response, be it through joint missions, transparent and open sharing of information, or joint training/contingency planning;
- In the continuation of its earlier efforts in this domain, endeavour to produce a programme concept note focusing on how to best partner and implement programme activities with/through adolescents in crises and conflict situations. It is hoped that such a note would then prove useful to other regions where adolescents equally constitute an important portion of the population.